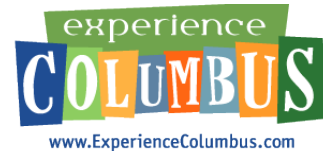




FRANKLIN COUNTY CONVENTION
FACILITIES AUTHORITY



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Hilton Columbus Downtown Breaks Ground, \$140M Convention Headquarters Hotel to Open in Fall 2012

COLUMBUS, Ohio (July 13, 2010) – The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority, in partnership with Hilton Worldwide, broke ground today on the new Hilton Columbus Downtown located in Columbus, Ohio. The convention headquarters hotel will be located at 401 N. High St., which is on the west side of High Street, across from the SMG-managed Greater Columbus Convention Center and near Nationwide Arena. The project is a collaboration among the Franklin County Commissioners, Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority, City of Columbus and Nationwide Realty Investors, Inc. The \$140 million, full-service convention hotel is expected to open in fall 2012 and will feature 532 rooms, 48 suites and 22,800 square feet of meeting space, including a 12,000 square-foot ballroom.

The property will be owned and developed by the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority and operated by Hilton Worldwide. The design group consists of architects HOK and Columbus-based Moody Nolan and interior designers, Simeone Deary Design Group. Turner Smoot is the project construction manager.

“The addition of the 532-room Hilton Columbus Downtown, combined with the existing amenities of the Greater Columbus Convention Center, will enable our city to compete as a convention destination for more than 900 national trade shows, conventions and meetings in our target convention market,” said Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority Board Chairman John S. Christie. “We are in a great position to think long-term. Columbus is looking beyond the short-term and preparing for the next ten years.”



“Large regional and national groups require room blocks of 1,000 to 3,500 hotel rooms during peak nights of attendance,” said William C. Jennison, executive director of the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority. “The availability of this new hotel will augment the room inventory and lead to additional convention bookings that will also increase utilization of the Greater Columbus Convention Center.”

“The Hilton Columbus Downtown will take us to the next level as a tourist destination,” said Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman. “Even more importantly, it will create jobs Downtown and throughout our city at a time when our residents are in need of new employment opportunities.”

"The new full-service Hilton Columbus Downtown supports Franklin County and the City of Columbus' current investment in our convention facilities," added John O'Grady, president of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners. "This project is a true testament to the collaborative efforts of Central Ohio's leadership."

"This exciting new hotel will serve as an underpinning for our already robust \$7.2 billion tourism industry and stimulates additional private investment. This is the perfect time to get shovels in the ground and put people to work," said Michael C. Mentel, Columbus City Council President. "This expansion creates jobs not only for those who build the hotel and eventually work at this hotel, but also for those working at our restaurants, our nightspots, our sports and entertainment venues and the hotels we already have."

The hotel will include a 160-seat, full-service restaurant, a 100-seat lounge, a specialty coffee outlet, an executive lounge, and a lobby featuring a large atrium with skylights to give an indoor-outdoor feel and a combination brick and glass façade. The Greater Columbus Convention Center's 900-vehicle parking garage adjacent to the hotel will service the property. In continuing the city of Columbus' commitment to sustainability, the Hilton Columbus Downtown will be LEED Certified as well as Green Seal Certified from an operating standpoint.

"We're thrilled the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority selected Hilton to operate Columbus' new convention headquarters hotel in one of the city's most vibrant neighborhoods," said Dave Horton, Global Head, Hilton Hotels brand. "This \$140 million project allows us to truly enhance the downtown hotel package for anyone considering Columbus as a future meeting destination. The hotel's grand opening in 2012 could not have come at a better time given the much-anticipated bicentennial celebration slated for the same year."

"With the addition of the Hilton Columbus Downtown to the Destination Columbus sell, we are able to offer multiple downtown-headquarter hotel opportunities to more than one convention or trade show at a time, as well as host larger national conventions and trade shows within the 1.7 million-square-foot Greater Columbus Convention Center," said Paul Astleford, President and CEO, Experience Columbus. "This new property significantly strengthens the Destination Columbus product offering in the global market."

One of the first conventions to take advantage of the enhanced Destination Columbus package is the Southern Baptist Convention who announced at the groundbreaking that they have chosen Columbus to host their June 14-17, 2015 meeting. The convention is anticipated to draw 16,000 attendees bringing in 19,530 room nights and an estimated \$6.2 million in visitor spending to Central Ohio.

"The Southern Baptist Convention is excited to be holding its annual meeting in Columbus in 2015 in the beautiful Greater Columbus Convention Center," said Don Magee, Associate Vice President of Finance for the Southern Baptist Convention. "Without the additional rooms provided by the building of the Hilton Columbus Downtown, we would not have been able to consider meeting here."



About the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority

As the owner and developer of the Greater Columbus Convention Center, the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority was responsible for overseeing the \$85 million expansion, renovation and parking development of the facility completed in 2001 and the \$40 million renovation and expansion of Battelle Grand completed in 2009. For more information on the authority and the convention center, visit www.ColumbusConventions.com.

About Hilton Hotels

Hilton Hotels is the stylish, forward-thinking global leader of hospitality that welcomes guests in more countries than any other full-service hotel brand. The Hilton brand currently includes more than 530 hotels and resorts in 76 countries, and plans to serve travelers in 80 countries by the end of 2011. By offering innovative products, services and amenities, Hilton enables travelers to be at their best 24/7, whether traveling for business or leisure. Start your journey at www.Hilton.com.

About Hilton Worldwide

Hilton Worldwide is the leading global hospitality company, spanning the lodging sector from luxurious full-service hotels and resorts to extended-stay suites and mid-priced hotels. For 91 years, Hilton Worldwide has been offering business and leisure travelers the finest in accommodations, service, amenities and value. The company is dedicated to continuing its tradition of providing exceptional guest experiences across its global brands. Its brands are comprised of more than 3,600 hotels and 592,000 rooms in 81 countries and include Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, Conrad Hotels & Resorts, Hilton, Doubletree, Embassy Suites Hotels, Hilton Garden Inn, Hampton Hotels, Homewood Suites by Hilton, Home2 Suites by Hilton and Hilton Grand Vacations. The company also manages the world-class guest reward program Hilton Honors®. For more information about the company, please visit www.HiltonWorldwide.com.

About Experience Columbus

Experience Columbus is the destination sales and marketing organization for the Greater Columbus community. Formerly the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, Experience Columbus works with the Columbus community to create a competitive distinction in the visitor marketplace, attracting leisure visitors, conventions and meetings. For more information on the organization, please visit www.ExperienceColumbus.com.